

AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILDREN; CLARIFYING PROCEDURES FOR THE
PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN ALLEGED TO BE ABUSED OR NEGLECTED;
AMENDING SECTIONS OF THE CHILDREN'S CODE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. Section 32A-1-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993,
Chapter 77, Section 12) is amended to read:

"32A-1-3. PURPOSE OF ACT.--The Children's Code shall
be interpreted and construed to effectuate the following
legislative purposes:

A. first to provide for the care, protection and
wholesome mental and physical development of children coming
within the provisions of the Children's Code and then to
preserve the unity of the family whenever possible. The
child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern.
Permanent separation of the child from the family, however,
would especially be considered when the child or another
child of the parent has suffered permanent or severe injury
or repeated abuse. It is the intent of the legislature
that, to the maximum extent possible, children in New Mexico
shall be reared as members of a family unit;

B. to provide judicial and other procedures
through which the provisions of the Children's Code are
executed and enforced and in which the parties are assured a
fair hearing and their constitutional and other legal rights
are recognized and enforced;

C. to provide a continuum of services for
children and their families, from prevention to treatment,
considering whenever possible prevention, diversion and

early intervention, particularly in the schools;

D. to provide children with services that are sensitive to their cultural needs;

E. to provide for the cooperation and coordination of the civil and criminal systems for investigation, intervention and disposition of cases, to minimize interagency conflicts and to enhance the coordinated response of all agencies to achieve the best interests of the child victim; and

F. to provide continuity for children and families appearing before the children's court by assuring that, whenever possible, a single judge hears all successive cases or proceedings involving a child or family."

Section 2. Section 32A-1-4 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 13, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-1-4. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Children's Code:

A. "adult" means an individual who is eighteen years of age or older;

B. "child" means an individual who is less than eighteen years old;

C. "court", when used without further qualification, means the children's court division of the district court and includes the judge, special master or commissioner appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Code or supreme court rule;

D. "court appointed special advocate" or "CASA" means a person appointed as a CASA, pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Court Rules and Forms, who assists the court in determining the best interests of the child by investigating the case and submitting a report to

the court;

E. "custodian" means a person, other than a parent or guardian, who exercises physical control, care or custody of the child, including any employee of a residential facility or any persons providing out-of-home care;

F. "department" means the children, youth and families department, unless otherwise specified;

G. "foster parent" means a person, including a relative of the child, licensed or certified by the department or a child placement agency to provide care for children in the custody of the department or agency;

H. "guardian" means the person having the duty and authority of guardianship;

I. "guardianship" means the duty and authority to make important decisions in matters having a permanent effect on the life and development of a child and to be concerned about the child's general welfare and includes:

(1) the authority to consent to marriage, to enlistment in the armed forces of the United States or to major medical, psychiatric and surgical treatment;

(2) the authority to represent the child in legal actions and to make other decisions of substantial legal significance concerning the child;

(3) the authority and duty of reasonable visitation of the child;

(4) the rights and responsibilities of legal custody when the physical custody of the child is exercised by the child's parents, except when legal custody has been vested in another person; and

(5) when the rights of the child's parents have been terminated as provided for in the laws governing termination of parental rights or when both of the child's parents are deceased, the authority to consent to the adoption of the child and to make any other decision concerning the child that the child's parents could have made;

J. "guardian ad litem" means an attorney appointed by the children's court to represent and protect the best interests of the child in a court proceeding; provided that no party or employee or representative of a party to the proceeding shall be appointed to serve as a guardian ad litem;

K. "Indian child" means an unmarried person who is:

- (1) less than eighteen years old;
- (2) a member of an Indian tribe or is eligible for membership in an Indian tribe; and
- (3) the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe;

L. "Indian child's tribe" means:

- (1) the Indian tribe in which an Indian child is a member or eligible for membership; or
- (2) in the case of an Indian child who is a member or eligible for membership in more than one tribe, the Indian tribe with which the Indian child has more significant contacts;

M. "judge", when used without further qualification, means the judge of the court;

N. "legal custody" means a legal status created

by the order of the court or other court of competent jurisdiction that vests in a person, department or agency the right to determine where and with whom a child shall live; the right and duty to protect, train and discipline the child and to provide the child with food, shelter, education and ordinary and emergency medical care; the right to consent to major medical, psychiatric, psychological and surgical treatment and to the administration of legally prescribed psychotropic medications pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act; and the right to consent to the child's enlistment in the armed forces of the United States, all subject to the powers, rights, duties and responsibilities of the guardian of the child and subject to any existing parental rights and responsibilities. An individual granted legal custody of a child shall exercise the rights and responsibilities as custodian personally, unless otherwise authorized by the court entering the order;

O. "parent" or "parents" includes a biological or adoptive parent if the biological or adoptive parent has a constitutionally protected liberty interest in the care and custody of the child. A parent retains all of the duties and authority of guardianship and legal custody of the child, unless otherwise limited or altered by court order;

P. "permanency plan" means a determination by the court that the child's interest will be served best by:

- (1) return to the parent;
- (2) placement with a person who will be the child's permanent guardian;

- (3) placement for adoption after the

parents' rights have been relinquished or terminated or after a motion has been filed to terminate parental rights;

(4) placement in the custody of the department until the child reaches the age of majority, unless the child is emancipated, pursuant to the Emancipation of Minors Act; or

(5) placement in the custody of the department under a planned permanent living arrangement that meets the department's definition of long-term foster care;

Q. "person" means an individual or any other form of entity recognized by law;

R. "preadoptive parent" means a person with whom a child has been placed for adoption;

S. "tribal court" means:

(1) a court established and operated pursuant to a code or custom of an Indian tribe; or

(2) any administrative body of an Indian tribe that is vested with judicial authority;

T. "tribal court order" means a document issued by a tribal court that is signed by an appropriate authority, including a judge, governor or tribal council member, and that orders an action that is within the tribal court's jurisdiction; and

U. "tribunal" means any judicial forum other than the court."

Section 3. Section 32A-4-2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 96, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-2. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Abuse and Neglect Act:

A. "abandonment" includes instances when the

parent, without justifiable cause:

(1) left the child without provision for the child's identification for a period of fourteen days; or

(2) left the child with others, including the other parent or an agency, without provision for support and without communication for a period of:

(a) three months if the child was under six years of age at the commencement of the three-month period; or

(b) six months if the child was over six years of age at the commencement of the six-month period;

B. "abused child" means a child:

(1) who has suffered or who is at risk of suffering serious harm because of the action or inaction of the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) who has suffered physical abuse, emotional abuse or psychological abuse inflicted or caused by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(3) who has suffered sexual abuse or sexual exploitation inflicted by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(4) whose parent, guardian or custodian has knowingly, intentionally or negligently placed the child in a situation that may endanger the child's life or health; or

(5) whose parent, guardian or custodian has knowingly or intentionally tortured, cruelly confined or cruelly punished the child;

C. "aggravated circumstances" include those circumstances in which the parent, guardian or custodian

has:

(1) attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm to the child or great bodily harm or death to the child's sibling;

(2) attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm or death to another parent, guardian or custodian of the child;

(3) attempted, conspired to subject or has subjected the child to torture, chronic abuse or sexual abuse; or

(4) had his parental rights over a sibling of the child terminated involuntarily;

D. "great bodily harm" means an injury to a person that creates a high probability of death, that causes serious disfigurement or that results in permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any member or organ of the body;

E. "neglected child" means a child:

(1) who has been abandoned by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) who is without proper parental care and control or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being because of the faults or habits of the child's parent, guardian or custodian or the failure or refusal of the parent, guardian or custodian, when able to do so, to provide them;

(3) who has been physically or sexually abused, when the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm;

(4) whose parent, guardian or custodian is unable to discharge his responsibilities to and for the child because of incarceration, hospitalization or physical or mental disorder or incapacity; or

(5) who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of the law; provided that nothing in the Children's Code shall be construed to imply that a child who is being provided with treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination, by a duly accredited practitioner thereof is for that reason alone a neglected child within the meaning of the Children's Code; and further provided that no child shall be denied the protection afforded to all children under the Children's Code;

F. "physical abuse" includes but is not limited to any case in which the child exhibits evidence of skin bruising, bleeding, malnutrition, failure to thrive, burns, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling or death and:

(1) there is not a justifiable explanation for the condition or death;

(2) the explanation given for the condition is at variance with the degree or nature of the condition;

(3) the explanation given for the death is at variance with the nature of the death; or

(4) circumstances indicate that the condition or death may not be the product of an accidental occurrence;

G. "sexual abuse" includes but is not limited to

criminal sexual contact, incest or criminal sexual penetration, as those acts are defined by state law; and

H. "sexual exploitation" includes but is not limited to:

(1) allowing, permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution;

(2) allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging a child in obscene or pornographic photographing; or

(3) filming or depicting a child for obscene or pornographic commercial purposes, as those acts are defined by state law."

Section 4. Section 32A-4-7 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 101) is amended to read:

"32A-4-7. RELEASE OR DELIVERY FROM CUSTODY.--

A. A person taking a child into custody shall, with all reasonable speed:

(1) release the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian and issue verbal counsel or warning as may be appropriate; or

(2) deliver the child to the department or to an appropriate shelter-care facility or, in the case of a child who is believed to be suffering from a serious physical or mental condition or illness that requires prompt treatment or diagnosis, deliver the child to a medical facility. If a law enforcement officer delivers a child to a shelter-care facility or a medical facility, the officer shall immediately notify the department that the child has been placed in the department's custody.

B. When an alleged neglected or abused child is

delivered to the department, a department caseworker shall review the need for placing the child in custody and shall release the child from custody unless custody is appropriate or has been ordered by the court. When a child is delivered to an appropriate shelter-care facility or medical facility, a department caseworker shall review the need for retention of custody within a reasonable time after delivery of the child to the facility and shall release the child from custody unless custody is appropriate or has been ordered by the court.

C. If a child is placed in the custody of the department and is not released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, the department shall give written notice thereof as soon as possible, and in no case later than twenty-four hours, to the child's parent, guardian or custodian together with a statement of the reason for taking the child into custody.

D. Reasonable efforts shall be made to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child from the child's home, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety. In all cases when a child is taken into custody, the child shall be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, unless the department files a petition within two days from the date that the child was taken into custody."

Section 5. Section 32A-4-18 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 112) is amended to read:

"32A-4-18. CUSTODY HEARINGS--TIME LIMITATIONS--NOTICE--PROBABLE CAUSE.--

A. When a child alleged to be neglected or abused

has been taken into custody by the department or the department has petitioned the court for temporary custody, a custody hearing shall be held within ten days from the date the petition is filed to determine if the child should remain in or be placed in the department's custody pending adjudication. Upon written request of the respondent, the hearing may be held earlier, but in no event shall the hearing be held sooner than two days after the date the petition was filed.

B. The parent, guardian or custodian of the child alleged to be abused or neglected shall be given reasonable notice of the time and place of the custody hearing.

C. At the custody hearing, the court shall release the child to his parent, guardian or custodian unless probable cause exists to believe that:

(1) the child is suffering from an illness or injury, and the parent, guardian or custodian is not providing adequate care for the child;

(2) the child is in immediate danger from his surroundings and removal from those surroundings is necessary for the child's safety or well-being;

(3) the child will be subject to injury by others if not placed in the custody of the department;

(4) there has been an abandonment of the child by his parent, guardian or custodian; or

(5) the parent, guardian or custodian is not able or willing to provide adequate supervision and care for the child.

D. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, if the court determines that custody pending adjudication is

appropriate, the court may:

(1) return the child to his parent, guardian or custodian upon such conditions as will reasonably assure the safety and well-being of the child; or

(2) award custody of the child to the department with or without provision for visitation rights for the parent, guardian or custodian of the child.

Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety.

E. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, the court may order the respondent or the child alleged to be neglected or abused, or both, to undergo appropriate diagnostic examinations or evaluations. Copies of any diagnostic or evaluation reports ordered by the court shall be provided to the parties at least five days before the adjudicatory hearing is scheduled. The reports shall not be sent to the court.

F. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to custody hearings."

Section 6. Section 32A-4-20 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 114, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-20. CONDUCT OF HEARINGS--FINDINGS--DISMISSAL--DISPOSITIONAL MATTERS--PENALTY.--

A. The proceedings shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic, mechanical or other appropriate means.

B. All abuse and neglect hearings shall be closed to the general public.

C. Only the parties, their counsel, witnesses and other persons approved by the court may be present at a closed hearing. The foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child shall be given notice and an opportunity to be heard at the dispositional phase. Those other persons the court finds to have a proper interest in the case or in the work of the court may be admitted by the court to closed hearings on the condition that they refrain from divulging any information that would identify the child or family involved in the proceedings.

D. Accredited representatives of the news media shall be allowed to be present at closed hearings, subject to the condition that they refrain from divulging information that would identify any child involved in the proceedings or the parent, guardian or custodian of that child and subject to enabling regulations as the court finds necessary for the maintenance of order and decorum and for the furtherance of the purposes of the Children's Code.

E. If the court finds that it is in the best interest of the child, the child may be excluded from a neglect or an abuse hearing. Under the same conditions, a child may be excluded by the court during a hearing on dispositional issues.

F. Those persons or parties granted admission to a closed hearing who intentionally divulge information in violation of this section are guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

G. The court shall determine if the allegations of the petition are admitted or denied. If the allegations are denied, the court shall proceed to hear evidence on the petition. The court after hearing all of the evidence

bearing on the allegations of neglect or abuse shall make and record its findings on whether the child is a neglected child, an abused child or both. If the petition alleges that the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances, then the court shall also make and record its findings on whether the aggravated circumstances have been proven.

H. If the court finds on the basis of a valid admission of the allegations of the petition or on the basis of clear and convincing evidence, competent, material and relevant in nature, that the child is neglected or abused, the court may proceed immediately or at a postponed hearing to make disposition of the case. If the court does not find that the child is neglected or abused, the court shall dismiss the petition and may refer the family to the department for appropriate services.

I. In that part of the hearings held under the Children's Code on dispositional issues, all relevant and material evidence helpful in determining the questions presented, including oral and written reports, may be received by the court and may be relied upon to the extent of its probative value even though not competent had it been offered during the part of the hearings on adjudicatory issues.

J. On the court's motion or that of a party, the court may continue the hearing on the petition for a period not to exceed thirty days to receive reports and other evidence in connection with disposition. The court shall continue the hearing pending the receipt of the predisposition study and report if that document has not

been prepared and received. During any continuances under this subsection, the court shall make an appropriate order for legal custody."

Section 7. Section 32A-4-22 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 116, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-22. DISPOSITION OF ADJUDICATED ABUSED OR NEGLECTED CHILD.--

A. If not held in conjunction with the adjudicatory hearing, the dispositional hearing shall be commenced within thirty days after the conclusion of the adjudicatory hearing. At the conclusion of the dispositional hearing, the court shall make and include in the dispositional judgment its findings on the following:

(1) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with his parent, siblings and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest;

(2) the child's adjustment to his home, school and community;

(3) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved;

(4) the wishes of the child as to his custodian;

(5) the wishes of the child's parent, guardian or custodian as to the child's custody;

(6) whether there exists a relative of the child or other individual who, after study by the department, is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child;

(7) the availability of services

recommended in the treatment plan prepared as a part of the predisposition study in accordance with the provisions of Section 32A-4-21 NMSA 1978;

(8) the ability of the parent to care for the child in the home so that no harm will result to the child;

(9) whether reasonable efforts were used by the department to prevent removal of the child from the home prior to placement in substitute care and whether reasonable efforts were used to attempt reunification of the child with the natural parent; and

(10) if the child is an Indian child, whether the placement preferences set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or the placement preferences of the child's Indian tribe have been followed and whether the Indian child's treatment plan provides for maintaining the Indian child's cultural ties. When placement preferences have not been followed, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported.

B. If a child is found to be neglected or abused, the court may enter its judgment making any of the following dispositions to protect the welfare of the child:

(1) permit the child to remain with his parent, guardian or custodian, subject to those conditions and limitations the court may prescribe;

(2) place the child under protective supervision of the department; or

(3) transfer legal custody of the child to any of the following:

(a) the noncustodial parent, if it is

found to be in the child's best interest;

(b) an agency responsible for the care of neglected or abused children; or

(c) a child-placement agency willing and able to assume responsibility for the education, care and maintenance of the child and licensed or otherwise authorized by law to receive and provide care for the child.

C. If a child is found to be neglected or abused, in its dispositional judgment the court shall also order the department to implement and the child's parent, guardian or custodian to cooperate with any treatment plan approved by the court. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety. The court may determine that reasonable efforts are not required to be made when the court finds that:

(1) the efforts would be futile;

(2) the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances; or

(3) the parental rights of the parent to a sibling of the child have been terminated involuntarily.

D. Any parent, guardian or custodian of a child who is placed in the legal custody of the department or other person pursuant to Subsection B of this section shall have reasonable rights of visitation with the child as determined by the court, unless the court finds that the best interests of the child preclude any visitation.

E. The court may order reasonable visitation between a child placed in the custody of the department and the child's siblings or any other person who may

significantly affect the child's best interest, if the court finds the visitation to be in the child's best interest.

F. Unless a child found to be neglected or abused is also found to be delinquent, the child shall not be confined in an institution established for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children.

G. When the court vests legal custody in an agency, institution or department, the court shall transmit with the dispositional judgment copies of the clinical reports, the predisposition study and report and any other information it has pertinent to the care and treatment of the child.

H. Prior to any child being placed in the custody or protective supervision of the department, the department shall be provided with reasonable oral or written notification and an opportunity to be heard. At any hearing held pursuant to this subsection, the department may appear as a party.

I. When a child is placed in the custody of the department, the department shall investigate whether the child is eligible for enrollment as a member of an Indian tribe and, if so, the department shall pursue the enrollment on the child's behalf.

J. When the court determines pursuant to Subsection C of this section that no reasonable efforts at reunification are required, the court shall conduct, within thirty days, a permanency hearing as described in Section 32A-4-25.1 NMSA 1978. Reasonable efforts shall be made to implement and finalize the permanency plan in a timely manner."

Section 8. Section 32A-4-25 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 119, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-25. PERIODIC REVIEW OF DISPOSITIONAL JUDGMENTS.--

A. The initial judicial review shall be held within sixty days of the disposition. At the initial review, the parties shall demonstrate to the court efforts made to implement the treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order. The court shall determine the extent to which the treatment plan has been implemented and make supplemental orders as necessary to assure compliance with the treatment plan and the safety of the child. Prior to the initial judicial review, the department shall submit a copy of the adjudicatory order, the dispositional order and notice of the initial judicial review to the local substitute care review board for that judicial district created under the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act. A representative of the local substitute care review board shall be permitted to attend and comment to the court.

B. Subsequent periodic reviews of dispositional orders shall be held within six months of the conclusion of the permanency hearing or, if a motion has been filed for termination of parental rights or permanent guardianship, within six months of the decision on that motion and every six months thereafter. Prior to the review, the department shall submit a progress report to the local substitute care review board for that judicial district created under the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act. Prior to any judicial review by the court pursuant to this section, the local

substitute care review board may review the dispositional order or the continuation of the order and the department's progress report and report its findings and recommendations to the court. The review may be carried out by either of the following:

(1) a judicial review hearing conducted by the court; or

(2) a judicial review hearing conducted by a special master appointed by the court; provided, however, that the court approve any findings made by the special master.

C. The children's court attorney shall give notice to all parties, the child's guardian ad litem, the child's CASA, a contractor administering the local substitute care review board and the child's foster parent or substitute care provider of the time, place and purpose of any judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection A or B of this section.

D. At any judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the department, the child's guardian ad litem and all parties given notice under Subsection C of this section shall have the opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. At the hearing, the department shall show that it has made reasonable effort to implement any treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order and shall present a treatment plan consistent with the purposes of the Children's Code for any period of extension of the dispositional order. The respondent shall demonstrate to the court that efforts to comply with the treatment plan

approved by the court in its dispositional order and efforts to maintain contact with the child were diligent and made in good faith. The court shall determine the extent of compliance with the treatment plan and whether progress is being made toward establishing a stable and permanent placement for the child.

E. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to hearings held pursuant to this section. The court may admit testimony by any person given notice of the hearing who has information about the status of the child or the status of the treatment plan.

F. At the conclusion of any hearing held pursuant to this section, the court shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law.

G. When the child is an Indian child, the court shall determine during review of a dispositional order whether the placement preferences set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or the placement preferences of the child's Indian tribe were followed and whether the child's treatment plan provides for maintaining the child's cultural ties. When placement preferences have not been followed, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported.

H. Based on its findings at a judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the court shall order one of the following dispositions:

(1) dismiss the action and return the child to his parent without supervision if the court finds that conditions in the home that led to abuse have been corrected and it is now safe for the return of the abused child;

(2) permit the child to remain with his parent, guardian or custodian subject to those conditions and limitations the court may prescribe, including protective supervision of the child by the department;

(3) return the child to his parent and place the child under the protective supervision of the department;

(4) transfer or continue legal custody of the child to:

(a) the noncustodial parent, if that is found to be in the child's best interests;

(b) a relative or other individual who, after study by the department or other agency designated by the court, is found by the court to be qualified to receive and care for the child and is appointed as a permanent guardian of the child; or

(c) the department, subject to the provisions of Paragraph (6) of this subsection;

(5) continue the child in the legal custody of the department with or without any required parental involvement in a treatment plan. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety unless the court finds that such efforts are not required. The court may determine that reasonable efforts are not required to be made when the court finds that:

(a) the efforts would be futile;

(b) the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances; or

(c) the parental rights of the parent

to a sibling of the child have been terminated involuntarily;

(6) make additional orders regarding the treatment plan or placement of the child to protect the child's best interests if the court determines the department has failed in implementing any material provision of the treatment plan or abused its discretion in the placement or proposed placement of the child; or

(7) if during a judicial review the court finds that the child's parent, guardian or custodian has not complied with the court-ordered treatment plan, the court may order:

(a) the child's parent, guardian or custodian to show cause why he should not be held in contempt of court; or

(b) a hearing on the merits of terminating parental rights.

I. Dispositional orders entered pursuant to this section shall remain in force for a period of six months, except for orders that provide for transfer of the child to the child's noncustodial parent or to a permanent guardian.

J. The report of the local substitute care review board submitted to the court pursuant to Subsection B of this section shall become a part of the child's permanent court record.

K. When the court determines, pursuant to Paragraph (5) of Subsection H of this section, that no reasonable efforts at reunification are required, the court shall conduct, within thirty days, a permanency hearing as described in Section 32A-4-25.1 NMSA 1978. Reasonable

efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with the permanency plan and to complete whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child."

Section 9. Section 32A-4-27 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 121) is amended to read:

"32A-4-27. INTERVENTION--PERSONS PERMITTED TO INTERVENE.--

A. At any stage of an abuse or neglect proceeding, a person described in this subsection may be permitted to intervene as a party with a motion for affirmative relief:

(1) a foster parent whom the child has resided with for at least six months;

(2) a relative within the fifth degree of consanguinity with whom the child has resided;

(3) a stepparent with whom the child has resided; or

(4) a person who wishes to become the child's permanent guardian.

B. When determining whether a person described in Subsection A of this section should be permitted to intervene, the court shall consider:

(1) the person's rationale for the proposed intervention; and

(2) whether intervention is in the best interest of the child.

C. When the court determines that the child's best interest will be served as a result of intervention by a person described in Subsection A of this section, the

court may permit intervention unless the party opposing intervention can demonstrate that a viable plan for reunification with the respondents is in progress and that intervention could impede the progress of the reunification plan.

D. The persons described in this subsection shall be permitted to intervene during any stage of an abuse or neglect proceeding:

(1) a parent of the child who is not named in the petition alleging abuse or neglect; and

(2) when the child is an Indian child, the child's Indian tribe.

E. The child's foster parent shall be permitted to intervene when:

(1) the foster parent desires to adopt the child;

(2) the child has resided with the foster parent for at least six months within the year prior to the termination of parental rights;

(3) a motion for termination of parental rights has been filed by a person other than the foster parent; and

(4) bonding between the child and the child's foster parent is alleged as a reason for terminating parental rights in the motion for termination of parental rights.

F. The foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child shall be given notice of, and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing with respect to the child, except that this subsection shall

not be construed to require that any foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child be made a party to such a review or hearing solely on the basis of the notice and opportunity to be heard."

Section 10. Section 32A-4-28 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 122, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-28. TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS--ADOPTION DECREE.--

A. In proceedings to terminate parental rights, the court shall give primary consideration to the physical, mental and emotional welfare and needs of the child, including the likelihood of the child being adopted if parental rights are terminated.

B. The court shall terminate parental rights with respect to a child when:

(1) there has been an abandonment of the child by his parents;

(2) the child has been a neglected or abused child as defined in the Abuse and Neglect Act and the court finds that the conditions and causes of the neglect and abuse are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future despite reasonable efforts by the department or other appropriate agency to assist the parent in adjusting the conditions that render the parent unable to properly care for the child. The court may find in some cases that efforts by the department or another agency are unnecessary, when:

(a) there is a clear showing that the efforts would be futile;

(b) the parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances; or

(c) the parental rights of the parent to a sibling of the child have been terminated involuntarily; or

(3) the child has been placed in the care of others, including care by other relatives, either by a court order or otherwise and the following conditions exist:

(a) the child has lived in the home of others for an extended period of time;

(b) the parent-child relationship has disintegrated;

(c) a psychological parent-child relationship has developed between the substitute family and the child;

(d) if the court deems the child of sufficient capacity to express a preference, the child no longer prefers to live with the natural parent;

(e) the substitute family desires to adopt the child; and

(f) a presumption of abandonment created by the conditions described in Subparagraphs (a) through (e) of this paragraph has not been rebutted.

C. A finding by the court that all of the conditions set forth in Subparagraphs (a) through (f) of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section exist shall create a rebuttable presumption of abandonment.

D. The termination of parental rights involving a child subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 shall comply with the requirements of that act.

E. If the court finds that parental rights should be terminated; that the requirements for the adoption of a child have been satisfied; that the prospective adoptive parent is a party to the action; and that good cause exists to waive the filing of a separate petition for adoption, the court may proceed to grant adoption of the child, absent an appeal of the termination of parental rights. The court shall not waive any time requirements set forth in the Adoption Act unless the termination of parental rights occurred pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section. The court may enter a decree of adoption only after finding that the party seeking to adopt the child has satisfied all of the requirements set forth in the Adoption Act. Unless otherwise stipulated by all parties, an adoption decree shall take effect sixty days after the termination of parental rights, to allow the department sufficient time to provide counseling for the child and otherwise prepare the child for the adoption. The adoption decree shall conform to the requirements of the Adoption Act and shall have the same force and effect as other adoption decrees entered pursuant to that act. The court clerk shall assign an adoption case number to the adoption decree."

Section 11. Section 32A-4-29 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 123, as amended) is amended to read:

"32A-4-29. TERMINATION PROCEDURE.--

A. A motion to terminate parental rights may be filed at any stage of the abuse or neglect proceeding. The proceeding may be initiated by any of the following:

- (1) the department;
- (2) a licensed child placement agency; or
- (3) any other person having a legitimate interest in the matter, including the child's guardian ad litem, a petitioner for adoption, a foster parent or a relative of the child.

B. The motion for termination of parental rights shall be signed, verified by the moving party and filed with the court. The motion shall set forth:

- (1) the date, place of birth and marital status of the child, if known;
- (2) the grounds for termination and the facts and circumstances supporting the grounds for termination;
- (3) the names and addresses of the persons or authorized agency or agency officer to whom custody might be transferred;
- (4) whether the child resides or has resided with a foster parent who desires to adopt this child;
- (5) whether the motion is in contemplation of adoption;
- (6) the relationship or legitimate interest of the moving party to the child; and
- (7) whether the child is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and, if so:
 - (a) the tribal affiliations of the child's parents;
 - (b) the specific actions taken by the moving party to notify the parents' tribes and the results

of the contacts, including the names, addresses, titles and telephone numbers of the persons contacted. Copies of any correspondence with the tribes shall be attached as exhibits to the petition; and

(c) what specific efforts were made to comply with the placement preferences set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or the placement preferences of the appropriate Indian tribes.

C. A parent who has not previously been a party to the proceeding shall be named in the motion and shall become a party to the proceeding unless the court determines that the parent has not established a protected liberty interest in his relationship with the child.

D. Notice of the filing of the motion, accompanied by a copy of the motion, shall be served by the moving party on all other parties, the foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child with whom the child is residing, foster parents with whom the child has resided for six months within the previous twelve months, the custodian of the child, any person appointed to represent any party and any other person the court orders. Service shall be in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts for the service of motions in a civil action in this state, except that foster parents and attorneys of record in this proceeding shall be served by certified mail. The notice shall state specifically that the person served shall file a written response to the motion within twenty days if the person intends to contest the termination. In any case involving a child subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of

1978, notice shall also be sent by certified mail to the tribes of the child's parents and upon any "Indian custodian" as that term is defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 1903(6). Further notice shall not be required on a parent who has been provided notice previously pursuant to Section 32A-4-17 NMSA 1978 and who failed to make an appearance.

E. If the identity or whereabouts of a person entitled to service are unknown, the moving party shall file a motion for an order granting service by publication supported by the affidavit of the moving party or his agent or attorney detailing the efforts made to locate the person entitled to service. Upon being satisfied that reasonable efforts to locate the person entitled to service have been made and that information as to the identity or whereabouts of the person is still insufficient to effect service in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts, the court shall order service by publication pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts.

F. After a motion for the termination of parental rights is filed, the parent shall be advised of the right to counsel unless the parent is already represented by counsel. Counsel shall be appointed, upon request, for any parent who is unable to obtain counsel due to financial reasons or, if in the court's discretion, the interests of justice require appointment of counsel.

G. The court shall assure that a guardian ad litem represents the child in all proceedings for the termination of parental rights.

H. When a motion to terminate parental rights is

filed, the moving party shall request a hearing on the motion. The hearing date shall be at least thirty days, but no more than sixty days, after service is effected upon the parties entitled to service under this section.

I. In any action for the termination of parental rights brought by a party other than the department and involving a child in the custody of the department, the department may:

(1) litigate a motion for the termination of parental rights that was initially filed by another party; or

(2) move that the motion for the termination of parental rights be found premature and denied.

J. The grounds for any attempted termination shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence. In any proceeding involving a child subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, the grounds for any attempted termination shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt and shall meet the requirements set forth in 25 U.S.C. Section 1912(f).

K. When the court terminates parental rights, it shall appoint a custodian for the child and fix responsibility for the child's support.

L. In any termination proceeding involving a child subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, the court shall in any termination order make specific findings that the requirements of that act have been met.

M. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights divests the parent of all legal rights and privileges

and dispenses with both the necessity for the consent to or receipt of notice of any subsequent adoption proceeding concerning the child. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights shall not affect the child's rights of inheritance from and through the child's biological parents."

Section 12. Section 32A-4-32 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1993, Chapter 77, Section 126) is amended to read:

"32A-4-32. PERMANENT GUARDIANSHIP--PROCEDURE.--

A. A motion for permanent guardianship may be filed by any party.

B. Any application for permanent guardianship shall be signed and verified by the petitioner, filed with the court and set forth:

- (1) the date, place of birth and marital status of the child, if known;
- (2) the facts and circumstances supporting the ground for permanent guardianship;
- (3) the name and address of the prospective guardian and a statement that the person agrees to accept the duties and responsibilities of guardianship;
- (4) the basis for the court's jurisdiction;
- (5) the relationship of the child to the petitioner and the prospective guardian; and
- (6) whether the child is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and, if so:
 - (a) the tribal affiliations of the child's parents;
 - (b) the specific actions taken by the petitioner to notify the parents' tribe and the results of

the contacts, including the names, addresses, titles and telephone numbers of the persons contacted. Copies of any correspondence with the tribes shall be attached as exhibits to the petition; and

(c) what specific efforts were made to comply with the placement preferences set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or the placement preferences of the appropriate Indian tribes.

C. If the petition is not filed by the prospective guardian, the petition shall be verified by the prospective guardian.

D. Notice of the filing of the motion, accompanied by a copy of the motion, shall be served by the moving party on any parent who has not previously been made a party to the proceeding, the parents of the child, foster parents with whom the child is residing, the foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child with whom the child has resided for six months, the child's custodian, the department, any person appointed to represent any party, including the child's guardian ad litem, and any other person the court orders provided with notice. Service shall be in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts for the service of motions in a civil action in this state. The notice shall state specifically that the person served shall file a written response to the application within twenty days if the person intends to contest the guardianship.

E. When the child is an Indian child, subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, notice shall also be served upon the Indian tribes of the child's parents

and upon any "Indian custodian" as that term is defined in 25 U.S.C. Section 1903(6).

F. The grounds for permanent guardianship shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence. The grounds for permanent guardianship shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt and meet the requirements of 25 U.S.C. Section 1912(f) in any proceeding involving a child subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

G. A judgment of the court vesting permanent guardianship with an individual divests the biological or adoptive parent of legal custody or guardianship of the child, but is not a termination of the parent's rights. A child's inheritance rights from and through the child's biological or adoptive parents are not affected by this proceeding.

H. Upon a finding that grounds exist for a permanent guardianship, the court may incorporate into the final order provisions for visitation with the natural parents, siblings or other relatives of the child and any other provision necessary to rehabilitate the child or provide for the child's continuing safety and well being.

I. The court shall retain jurisdiction to enforce its judgment of permanent guardianship.

J. Any party to the abuse or neglect proceeding, the child or a parent of the child may make a motion for revocation of the order granting guardianship when there is a significant change of circumstances including:

(1) the child's parent is able and willing to properly care for the child; or

(2) the child's guardian is unable to

